

Fellowship in the Light

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of humility and obedience in achieving true fellowship with God and others.

Duration: 19:50

Scripture: Proverbs 8:34, Matthew 5:3, Romans 4:15, Romans 14:23, James 4:17

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility Before God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true obedience to God's Word, highlighting the need to address sin by its worst name to achieve victory over it. It delves into the concept of poverty of spirit as the key to unlocking spiritual treasures and entering the kingdom of heaven, contrasting false humility with genuine honesty before God. The message stresses the significance of continuous progress in spiritual growth and the humility to acknowledge personal need for God's grace moment by moment.

Transcript

or clever illustrations or clever thoughts from Matthew 5, 6, and 7, you will be like a man who's built his house on sand that collapses. But, instead of just getting bright ideas from those chapters, you obey when it says, if you get angry in your heart, it's equal to murder. And you get anger in your heart and say, boy, Lord, I murdered somebody just now.

I always say, call sin by its worst possible name if you want to get victory over it. If you don't want to get victory over it, call your anger a righteous indignation or something like that. Some, you know, clever word the devil suggests to you.

You'll never get victory. Call it murder. Lord, I murdered somebody just now in my heart.

I tell you, you'll get victory pretty quickly. That's what I did. When a little lustful thought or a little temptation or a little watching internet pornography, say, Lord, I committed adultery.

Say, Lord, I committed adultery ten times with ten different women today. You'll get victory over dirty thoughts pretty quickly. If you don't call it by the dirtiest name you can think of, I tell you, you can sit in a church with a tremendous impression you can give to another person who is a very holy spiritual person.

You'll be rotten inside. It's like people whose insides are being eaten by cancer and they look so healthy on the outside. I hope you don't want that.

So, Jesus said if you hear these words and you do them, then your life will be on rock. So whenever you read Matthew 5, 6, and 7, don't ask yourself whether you understood it. The foolish man understood it.

The foolish man preached about it. The wise man maybe never preached about it, but he did it. It's not a question of how much you preach.

It's about how much you do. The foolish man heard, understood, preached, but he didn't do. And so, the first verse in the Sermon on the Mount is the key to it.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now, I look at it like this. The kingdom of heaven, the picture I get in, my mind thinks in pictures and it helps me to understand Scripture, is like a huge building with hundreds of rooms, all filled with fantastic treasures, spiritual treasures.

And everything is locked, but there's one master key that will open every door in this kingdom of heaven. It's poverty of spirit. If we can understand poverty of spirit, if we've got this master key, it will open every door in the kingdom of heaven.

I want to be rich spiritually. I really have no interest in being rich on earth, but I have a tremendous interest in being rich spiritually. And I see this is the secret.

Poverty of spirit. That's the very first verse. It's almost as though the Lord is saying, you want to enter this wonderful life described in the Sermon on the Mount? Start with getting this key.

Jesus said like this, you know. You know this, in Matthew 19. He spoke about, verse 23.

Again, about the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit enter the kingdom of heaven. In other words, is it easy to get into these rooms? Jesus said it's very hard for certain people.

Matthew 19 and verse 23. It's very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. He won't be able to open the doors in this mansion.

If you're rich. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And the disciples, like you know, we would all think naturally, they didn't understand deep spiritual meanings.

They were not filled with the Holy Spirit yet. They thought of earthly riches. Because the story is of this rich young ruler who had come to him just before that.

Verse 22. The young man heard that he had to forsake all his wealth. And he owned much property.

Matthew 19, 22. And he went away. So, here was a man who had material wealth.

A lot of earthly money. And then Jesus said it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Obviously, you would think about earthly wealth.

Now I have discovered one thing. That most believers like to think that they are poor. I'm talking about materially, financially.

If I were to come to you and ask you, Brother, are you rich? I think almost all of you would say, no, I'm not rich, I'm poor. Were you rich compared to those disciples, the apostles of Jesus? Do you know what the apostles of Jesus said? When they heard, rich man cannot enter God's kingdom, they could have said, ah,

then we're okay. We're not rich.

That's not what they said. And there you see something of their humility and honesty. When Jesus said, the rich people cannot enter God's kingdom, those poor fishermen said, hey, then how will we be saved? Because they were comparing themselves with blind Bartimaeus and the other beggars on the street.

And when we say we are poor, we're not comparing ourselves with blind Bartimaeus and the beggars on the street. We're comparing ourselves with the millionaires and say we are poor. These people were more honest.

When Jesus said, the rich cannot enter God's kingdom, these poor fishermen said, then how will we get in? We're rich. And when you're honest like them, my brother, sister, you will enter into God's kingdom. I hope you got it.

They said, then how can we be saved? Verse 25, who can be saved then? All 12 of us are pretty rich. Really? Well, we have enough money. We've got a boat and we've got a net.

And we have a home and we've got food on our table and enough to feed our children and our children are not walking around in rags. When we're honest like them and say, Lord, we're not poor. We're rich.

But it's not just in that area. It's when we, I'm not saying we get rid of our money and house, we're going to enter God's kingdom. That's not it.

I'm saying it's our attitude towards, we all like to act humble by saying, I'm poor. It's a false humility. There's such a lot of false humility in Christendom.

It stinks. I react against it just like I react against a bad smell whenever I see false humility. I've seen a lot of it in preachers and believers and I can never have fellowship with such people.

It's easy to fellowship with a person who is absolutely honest and says, well, I'm not poor. I have more than enough for my own needs. I'm okay.

Or in any other area. It's honest. Very easy.

Beware of artificiality, brothers and sisters. But poverty of spirit, that's what we're talking about. Jesus, when he spoke about, he wasn't really talking about money primarily.

He said, the words that I speak to you are spirit and life. The flesh profits nothing. He was talking about poverty of spirit.

How do I know I'm poor in spirit? I've compared it with poor in body. I've seen lots of people in India, poor in body. Beggars.

I've seen people in the streets of Bangalore who were beggars 30 years ago and they're still beggars today. And a beggar is a person who is constantly aware of his own needs. He'll come and knock at the gate of your house or your door and say, can you give me some money? And if you ask him, where's the money I gave you yesterday? That's finished.

That was yesterday's need, that's all. I need some more today. He'll be back again tomorrow.

Can you give me something? That's a beggar. A poor in body. And I applied that illustration to poor in spirit.

Poor in spirit is the one who comes to the Lord's door or his gate and says, Lord, I need something from you. I need some grace. What about what I gave you yesterday? Oh, that was over yesterday, Lord.

I need something for today. I need help for today. What about all your Bible knowledge? Isn't that enough? No, no, no.

I don't want Bible knowledge. I want grace. The Bible says in Proverbs 8, verse 34.

Proverbs 8, 34. Blessed is the man who is poor in spirit. It's the same thing here.

It's the Old Testament equivalent of Matthew 5, 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed is the man, the Lord says, who listens to me, who waits at my gates like that beggar every day waiting. You know, when some beggars come to gates in India, an arrogant man inside, he may not go out and meet him.

Oh, it's a beggar. I can take my own time. I mean, if it was a rich man who came there, he would go out immediately.

Oh, it's a beggar. He waits. The beggar is not offended that you don't have high thoughts about him.

He's willing to wait. A beggar can wait and wait and wait. I've seen beggars wait outside church buildings in India because they feel these are people coming out in the presence of God, they'll give me some more money.

They wait outside banks. Banks and churches are the places where most beggars wait. And they wait.

And the Lord says, can you wait like that? Are you poor in spirit? Are you desperate in need? You know why that beggar waits? Because he says, I cannot survive without this. I have to wait. Whether the guy insults me or whatever it is, I have to wait.

If the first fellow doesn't help me, the next fellow may help me. He is desperate because he knows he cannot survive without that. He doesn't have anything for the day.

Why do we rush away from God's presence? Because we say, I can survive if God didn't give me anything for today. It's okay. What I got yesterday was good enough for me today.

Blessed is the man who is poor in spirit, who watches daily. Lord, if I am to make progress like the son today, become a little more like Jesus today than I was yesterday, I have to receive grace from you. If I am satisfying with the amount I have already become like Christ, which is way better than a whole lot of people in other denominations, I'll be like the son that stood still somewhere at 8 o'clock in the morning and just got stuck there.

That's how some believers are. You want to walk the path of the righteous, walk in fellowship, there is no such thing as standing still. It's continuous progress.

It may be very small, you can hardly see the sun moving, but it is. Such are the people who have no problem in fellowshiping with others because they have very low thoughts about themselves. Now, low thoughts about oneself does not mean low self-esteem.

You know, psychologists keep saying, don't have low self-esteem. I'll tell you honestly, Jesus never had low self-esteem. He looked at his disciples and said, you call me lord and master? That's what I am, he said in John 13.

He didn't say, oh, no, no, no, I'm not your lord and master. If somebody in my church says, Brother Zach, are you an elder in this church? I won't say, oh, no, no, no, I'm not. I say, I am.

I have no low self-esteem. I am the apple of God's eye. My name was in God's mind before the foundation of the world.

How can you make me have low self-esteem? Impossible. But, I seek to live with low thoughts about myself before God. I see my need for grace every single day, moment by moment.

You know that song, I need thee every hour? Most blessed Lord. There was a man who heard that and said, that's not good enough, Lord. And he wrote another song, which also you know, moment by moment.

Because he felt, I need thee every hour is not good enough. Do you feel that way? Moment by moment, Lord, I need thee. That's a person who's poor in spirit, who doesn't judge others, who looks at other people doing something wrong and always assumes the best.

It's just maybe that brother doesn't have light that that is wrong. So it's not wrong for him. It's wrong for me.

I'm in the 10th grade. Maybe he's in the 3rd grade. He hasn't heard, understood geometry and algebra yet, so it's okay if he gets all his geography and algebra problems wrong.

Not serious. That is graciousness. If a husband and wife could live like that, I assume that he or she does not have light in that area yet.

So it's not sin for him or her, but it is sin for me. God's given me light on it. So, you know, if you understand God, you'll understand this.

That what one person does can be sin for him and it's not sin for another. I'll show you two verses and then I'll close. James chapter 4, verse 17.

James 4, 17. Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do and then does not do it, it is sin. Got it? You know the right thing to do and you don't do it.

That's sin. What about the other guy who still doesn't know? It's not sin. That's why little children who don't know their left hand from the right hand don't sin in God's eyes.

That's why all babies who die go to heaven. Whether they are atheist babies or Muslim babies or Christian babies, it doesn't make a difference which family they're born into. They don't sin because they don't know their right hand from their left.

They don't know what is right or wrong. To him who knows what is right and does not do it. And there can be tremendous differences between a husband and wife in their spiritual level and understanding of one person knows this is wrong another person doesn't know it.

I remember a brother got up in one of our meetings years ago. I was in one of our churches a revival meeting somewhere else and I asked people to give testimonies and this guy was 70 years old and he got

up and said, I never knew till today that if I hurt my wife I have to apologize to her. Imagine living 70 years on earth and not knowing that.

Well, I suppose he didn't sin till that day because he never knew it was wrong. But we know. There are a lot of people who have come to our church and said, Brother Zach, I never knew till I came here that getting angry is a sin.

Nobody ever spoke about it in all the churches we went to. And it wasn't. But now that you've come here, you've got no excuse I say.

How do you know? But isn't it good to discover it? Do you want to live in ignorance? Isn't it good that the scan report told you that you've got a 10% chance of cancer? Or would you rather live in blissful ignorance when the cancer is spreading all over your body? Ignorance doesn't hinder the cancer from destroying you. So, that's one verse. And the other verse is Romans chapter 4 and verse 15.

Romans 4.15 Where there is no law, the last part of that verse, there is no violation. That means, if I haven't understood God's law in a certain area, I cannot possibly violate it because I don't even know it. It's unconscious.

And Romans 14.23 Whatever is not from faith is sin. He's talking about how what you do may be wrong for you, but it may not be wrong for another. So, give him freedom to do things differently.

A person who is poor in spirit has no problem with it. He has no problem at all because he says, I have to live according to the light I have. And that brother or that sister or your husband or your wife has only got to live according to the light they have.

One of the biggest problems with Christians is they inwardly demand that another fellow should live according to the light I have. Now, if you found a 10th grade student expecting his 3rd grade younger brother or sister to know all that he knows, who's the fool? The one in the 10th grade. I say, that's why a lot of Christians are fools.

They expect another person to live according to their light. Even Almighty God doesn't do that. So, to be poor in spirit means to see my own need and to judge myself.

Fellowship will be glorious. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray that what we have heard will not just come to us as a lot of information, but as revelation that makes us tremble at your word, that goes deep down and brings light in the deepest part of our being.

We know you love us. We know there's no condemnation in your word. Your word always comes to lift us up and not to cast us down.

We pray that it will accomplish that in everyone here. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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